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DIGITAL GUILLOTINE ANYONE? A GUIDE TO THE DECOMPUTATION OF ALGOCRATIC REGIMES

MASHINES AI, BAUDRILLARD, CODE, MODEL, SIMULATION

The eternal supply of reality has been exhausted in the process of digitalization, just as the biosphere of the earth has been used up in the course of capitalist valorization of natural resources. Ecological nostalgia is as unpromising as the illusion of a pre-digital world. So we need new strategies of resistance, such as a digital guillotine to cut off the heads of algocratic regimes, as Giorgi Vachnadze argues.

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We are held captive by a recursive simulacrum; an automated confessional that forces us to

produce ourselves and our reality according to the rules of digital logic. The model is an image of reality, but not in a representational sense, but in an interactive sense. The simulation is a fiction, but only insofar as reality itself is a fiction. The fiction of the model is set against the fiction of reality in a way that the rational of the model is mapped onto the rational of reality in a parallel way. Uncertainty, undecidability, and incompleteness act as catalysts rather than obstacles to the datafied sublation of human experience. Algorithms are comfortable with irrationality. A closed system would be much easier to criticize, an algocracy based on pure reason would be easier to overthrow. But an interactive field of governmentalized cybernetic practices that condition and subjectivize us gradually into becoming *Homo Algorismus,* are far more discrete and difficult to resist. Homo Oeconomicus Algorismus marks a new threshold in the neoliberal experiment with its own regimes of truth, its own apocalyptic narratives, and its own utopian promises. Instead of thinking machines, we now have calculating humans. And instead of deciphering creativity, we gradually reduce all creativity to a mere cypher.

"In the Delirium of the Simulation: Baudrillard Revisited" Achim Szepanski displays an expert demonstration of how we are being *played* by an interactive digital ideology. Algorithmic language games of truth, power and subjectivity crisscross and overlap in silent, violent, dazzling, and seductive ways. A kind of gaming ontology orchestrates Szepanski's work, where the world keeps playing (with) us in its refusal to answer in a straightforward "Yes" or "No" to the questions posed by modern techno-science. And it is the double-bind of an algorithmic regime that refuses to play "The Game of the World" – "either nature obeys, or we will force it to obey!" – that keeps us trapped inside the mainstream of mall music and commodified living. The regime chooses to play *us* instead by forcing human subjectivity into its reductive, binary, digital paradigm. Facilitating the annihilation of human subjectivity by rendering it entirely computational.

QUANTUM GOVERNMENTALITY

With the advent of quantum mechanics, we will soon be facing the politics of quantum algorithms or "quantum governmentality." These are non-Turing *hypercomputational* systems that operate in non-binary form beyond 1's and 0's. The quantum world is fundamentally counterintuitive to the human observer, things refuse to unfold in time and they resist spatial localization. Even more bizarre is the fact that some major thinkers in the field (Palomaki, Aerts, Görnitz, etc.), as cited by Szepanski, believe that even macroscopic systems can become entangled and exhibit quantum mechanical behavior. The real question, according to Szepanski, is not "what's wrong with quantum mechanics?", but in fact, what has been done to the human observer in face of the modern epistemic regime? The question that really needs to be posed is "what is wrong with classical physics and common sense?" What is wrong with the subject?

"For Baudrillard, the fact that we cannot simultaneously determine the speed and position of a particle is part of the illusion of the object and its eternal play," as Szepanski notes. We are being played – hard; by the object. The object dominates, decentering the subject and introducing ambiguity into the system. Baudrillardian objects are anxiety-inducing features of the world that refuse to be assimilated into rigorous formal conceptual apparatuses. Like

Jorge Luis Borges's "Lottery in the Babylon," what seemed a compartmentalized, locally domesticated occurrence of a chance event, has infiltrated the entirety of the social fabric, introducing an element of randomness at every moment. The quantum experiment testifies to the counterfeit nature of the subject-object dichotomy. Szepanski notes: "This raises the question of whether the concepts of subject and object can still be used at all in quantum theory." – or outside of it, for that matter.

The illusiveness of the quantum object offers some savory food for thought. Quantum entities are essentially series of relations, relations of relations; functions with placeholders unoccupied by arguments, functions whose variables are always functions in turn. A *transclassical* logic, which goes beyond the law of identity, excluded middle and non-contradiction is required to deal with these paradoxes; a "transformal" system for computing liminal spaces and predicting non-entity quasi-behavior. Objects are fundamentally processes, or *looping events*, that is, hybrid formations that exhibit relative levels of stability. Objects don't exist; only games. Strictly speaking, there are no objects in the universe, only processes and states of affairs.

THE DIGITAL HEAVENS OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

The digital world has opened a new avenue of *digital objects.* The virtual cybernetic field is characterized by complete hyperfunctional inter-substitutability of each and every entity within the program. An ontological ascension has taken place where things are no longer constrained by the laws of physics, the simulation is a purely (post)logical world. Insofar as there's enough computational power, silicon, precious metals and of course, the colonies where human labor is exploited and almost directly fed into the cybernetic system, the digital heavens of the Western hemisphere will remain alive and operational. For as long as genocide is being outsourced and actively produced in one part of the globe, biopolitical heavens will flourish in another. Imperialism has finally found a way to efficiently activate negentropic processes by accelerating entropic processes elsewhere. Coincidentally, AI and Machine Learning systems are here again, actively "recruited" to model warfare and minimize risk in the battlefield. An endless feedback loop of international, post-industrial economic colonialism and cyberwarfare.

Simulations do not mirror, nor do they represent the "real" world. There was never a real world to begin with. The world is always a product, it is always a construct (be it social or scientific). The simulation is a *production* of reality. What distinguishes the cybernetic *dispositif* is only the *way in which* new simulations constitute the contemporary regime. The speed of production, and the automation of world-building practices. The autonomy and independence of the digital production of equivalences, exchangeable sign-systems and abstract power-knowledge matrices that no longer have to answer to the world through the object-concept relation. This is what Szepanski refers to as "the divine referentiality of the images." Echoing Ludwig Wittgenstein, one could say that the picture no longer has anything in common with what it depicts, there is nothing to compare the picture with, no standard against which to measure reality, the world has no substance.

OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM

Jean Baudrillard offers us a digital guillotine or an anti-cybernetic strategy of resistance we can use to *decomputate* the head(s) of the royal simulacrum. Remaining grounded is no longer an option, there is no reality we could refer to in order to prevent or reverse the world's insertion into the computational episteme. The standing reserve of reality has been exhausted, like the earth's biosphere, there is practically nothing to go back to, an ecological nostalgia holds little promise. We need a novel strategy of deterritorializations. Szepanski notes: "Reality and truth emanate from the codes and models of hyperreality. Identities and differences are modulated according to the model and multiply into infinity. In hyperreality, any distinction between the real and the imaginary is abolished, only leaving room for the orbital return of models, and the simulated generation of distinction and difference." We no longer have the reality at our disposal, all we have are "reality effects," we are in a turbulence of waves and affects, we are constantly being modeled and digitized by the homogeneous counterfeit multiplicity of algorithmic visibilities.

The first line of attack, a trajectory for flanking the computational paradigm, comes from within the real itself. The *primary real*, as Szepanski emphasizes, a much neglected and perhaps opportunistically ignored aspect of Baudrillard's theory, points to the inherent failure of any attempt to render reality entirely transparent through codes. Very similar to Michel Foucault's notion of resistance, the primary real presents a structural residue that always falls outside the system. An element of the signified that remains opaque to the best attempts at cybernetic translation. The first decomputational tactic is therefore the recognition of fundamental (no matter how small) incomputability at the heart of every digital relation. A limit. Szepanski notes: "Baudrillard tries to use the (primary) real to think what remains removed from simulation or escapes from it and what does not simply disappear or dissolve." The real never disappears, but it can be turned into an infinitesimal, one that nonetheless continues to haunt the system as a noumenon.

According to Baudrillard via Szepanski, simulation is the discursive apparatus of capital par excellence. The last word, so to speak, in neoliberal governmentality and in the conduct of conducts. An anonymous force used for the complete levelling and homogenization of lifestyles, the deployment of false differences and a tyrannical universalism that privileges consumption/enjoyment over creativity/happiness. Again Szepanski: "The calculability inherent in code liquefies the solid according to the requirements of capital. In the informatic flow, the computer's close connection with the erasure of territory from the map and with the neoindustrial project of financialised globalisation is reflected in the derealisation of traditional forms of space and time." Place is replaced with space, persons; with avatars and relationships are commodified into transactions. The human lifeworld is colonized by mathematical optimization.

CONSUMPTION AND MATHEMATICS

What does consumption have to do with mathematics, or at least the superficial affectivity of calculation? Everything. The notion of a gapless series orchestrates the computational regime; fascist greed is at the center of the notion. Consumerism is a hysterical attempt to silence the silence of nothingness, an attempt to escape annihilation by making the brain into an algorithm of non-stop enjoyment. Junk after junk, an uninterrupted sequence of

counterfeit experiences; an averaged-out, hypernormalized sensationalism that prevents the subject from confronting her death. Sterilization of the amygdala through stable and sustained excitation. Subjectivity is sectioned off from the possibility of experiencing the full spectrum of human emotion. What do algorithms have to do with consumption then? The monotony of a wannabe spectacle – an affective lobotomy: the shopping mall. "Baudrillard explains that the postmodern subject leads the life of a cat that roams around and feels at home in an indifferent and highly designed domesticity of non-places," Szepanski states.

The shopping mall is a spectacular presentation of nothingness, a tightly knit collection of signifiers, false differences and things without content. A noisy silencing of everything meaningful. A full-bloodied non-experience. "The stupid machines must entertain at all costs, whereby the constant production of entertainment generates disgust on the one hand and the desire for more stupid entertainment on the other," Szepanski notes. Consumerism is a guilt-ridden glorification of procrastination, an evasion of life, meaning, creativity and happiness. Consumerism is what makes subjects into calculating humans, it is what makes the soul – Turing-Machine-Computable.

It is said that if you eat the same thing every day, no matter what it is, it will eventually start to taste like shit. This sums up the feeling of disgust universally experienced by everyone who has the privilege of consumption, the great honor of having their desire regulated, controlled, managed, policed and channeled. In short: calculated. Calculation and accounting, the mindless repetition of the same lie at the heart of the regime. When stupid abstractions are taken to constitute the structure of the universe, followed by the attempt to make these mechanical "miracles" tangible and real through industrial automation, what results is precisely the homogenization and thus the transformation of all human experience into fecal matter. The shopping mall is a shit-machine at the heart of the computational episteme. But in order to really enjoy it, consumers must be trained, disciplined, and coerced or "nudged" into the right direction. With the emergence of digital taylorism, algotaylorism, or AI-capitalism in the workplace we have a simultaneous development of "consumption drilling." We are taught to exchange happiness for pleasure at a very early age.

MILITANT MOBILIZATION OF HUMAN DESIRE

The object of consumption is not a stand-alone entity, it is placed within a causal nexus and inscribed with very specific instructions. A consumer object has meaning only within the context of a highly coded consumer environment. A highly controlled, panopticonic milieu where the rules for activity are just as specific as the rules of passivity, where incitements are as calculated as the prohibitions. And everything is seen, recorded, labelled, priced, hierarchized, and archived. Consumerism is the militant mobilization of human desire towards state-interest i.e., power, warfare, and genocide. It is the means whereby subjectivity is stored as a standing reserve of desire. Baudrillard famously notes how news and media use the same techniques of subjectivation as advertisements. A subject trained to perceive ads will also be trained to consume "news-events."

The dispositif operates through seduction. Consumers are tricked by advertising into thinking they are buying something of value, but the function of advertising is anything but communication. The advertisement is used to train the subject into desiring transaction for its

own sake. Szepanski notes: "In the end, the consumer object or product mutates into garbage for the shopaholic. The purchased products are then piled up in the cellar or placed in display cabinets because the only thing that counts is the pleasure of the act of buying itself, which in turn is stimulated by advertising." This is the primary mechanism of the apparatus, which trains the subject to love the empty gesture of buying. Transactions are the contemporary equivalent of confession. Transactions function as mobile, automated confessionals of the computational regime. It is important therefore that the subject is trained to love the act of confession, the act of buying. Data is therefore the scripture, and AI – the digital pastoral that governs subjects in the cybernetic monastery that stores desire.

taken from here: https://berlinergazette.de/digital-guillotine-anyone-a-guide-to-the-decomputation-of-algocratic-regimes/?fbclid=IwAR1syJ2YZV_iDkx4-ytfuHCg1YvfDHVBrtSQoz1UaEFRMOZE83TgnSx8HEw

you can order the book here: https://shop.becoming.press/products/in-the-delirium-of-the-simulation-baudrillard-revisited-by-achim-szepanski

or here: https://forceincmilleplateaux.bandcamp.com/merch/in-the-delirium-of-the-simulation-baudrillard-revisited-by-achim-szepanski